

VZCZCXRO6745
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHJA #0640/01 0650924
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 060924Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3624
INFO RUEHZS/ASEAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 5755
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0491
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1377
ZEN/AMCONSUL SURABAYA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000640

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

FROM AMCONSUL SURABAYA #0027

E.O. 12958: NA

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [PINS](#) [PREF](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: INDONESIA: MALUKU/AMBON REBUILDING EFFORTS CONTINUE TO MAKE
PROGRESS

REFS: A. 06 Jakarta 5366

- [1](#)B. 05 Jakarta 4890
- [1](#)C. 05 Jakarta 3145
- [1](#)D. 05 Jakarta 0240
- [1](#)E. 04 Jakarta 9264
- [1](#)F. 04 Jakarta 9254

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a two-day trip to Ambon, capitol of Maluku province and an area once characterized by sectarian conflict, Feb. 22-23, Consulate General Surabaya Public Affairs Officer (PAO) met with a variety of local contacts to discuss the current situation in the area and ideas for future public diplomacy outreach. Time and again, contacts reiterated local commitment to continued peace and strong support for community development efforts, noting that the current challenges facing Ambon are related to poverty and the area's tarnished reputation following several years of violence, not the potential for serious violence itself. Their commitment was demonstrated recently after two recent incidents involving homemade explosive devices March 3 and 5. Police are treating the events as criminal rather than terrorist acts. Both Christian and Muslim leaders publicly condemned the attacks, which are not seen as sectarian in nature. Malukan political, religious and business leaders are confident that the enormous efforts put in to building inter-religious dialog over the past three years are paying dividends. END SUMMARY.

PUTTING A NEW FACE ON AMBON

[1](#)2. (U) The trip was the second visit made by PAS Surabaya in two years and the Consulate's ninth in three years. During the visit, PAS met with community leaders, media, and alumni, researched potential Ambassador Cultural Fund projects, and met with students and teachers at University Pattimura. Pattimura, the province's major public university, is struggling to return to its previous position as one of the most respected higher education institutions in Eastern Indonesia.

[1](#)3. (U) According to contacts, Ambon is working hard to move past the years of sectarian conflict that broke out in 1999. (Background note: At a superficial level, the violence erupted after a simple traffic accident, sparking unrest caused by the deeper social issues resulting from several decades of transmigration of Javanese and Sulawesi Muslims to what was a predominately Christian province (and concurrent suspicions of "government-sponsored Islamization") as well as interference from outside provocateurs - both Muslim and Christian. End note.) The 2002 Malino accords brought Christian and Muslim leaders together and marked the official end to the violence. While there were some minor incidents in 2003, the situation has been calm and stabile for the last 3 years (Reftels.)

14. (SBU) Ambonese at all levels are trying to work across religious and ethnic lines to rebuild the province. PAO was impressed in particular by the dedication of religious and community leaders to work together for Maluku's continued development. Several inter-religious groups conduct programs in local schools and among community groups to promote cross cultural understanding and conflict resolution. They are also working together to educate local residents about the causes of past conflicts. Several contacts said they believe locals are now more aware of the role provocateurs from outside the region - Laskar Jihad among them - played in promoting violence in the past. Community leaders of different faiths also often publicly work and meet together to set an example for their communities. During a dinner with young religious leaders, Jacky Manuputty, Director of the Maluku Interfaith Institution for Humanitarianism, cited comments made by Sidney Jones when she recently visited Ambon as evidence of the significant changes that have taken place. The two had spent several months working together during the conflict and, according to Manuputty, she said, "Ambon was a completely different place" than it was only a few years ago.

15. (SBU) The combination of improved security and local commitment to development will allow the USG to reopen a more formal relationship with the University of Pattimura in Ambon with the expected placement of an English Language Fellow next year. (Background Note: Pattimura has a long history of cooperation with USG, mainly USAID, Fulbright and the former USIS, but those relationships largely fell dormant after 1999. End Note.) Pattimura is well aware of the battle it faces to rebuild itself and its reputation given recent history.

16. (SBU) There is intense interest among young religious leaders and academics in developing civic education programs with strong focus on cross-cultural understanding and conflict resolution. Civic

JAKARTA 00000640 002 OF 002

education programs are particularly important given the segregation between religious groups in Maluku, which limits opportunities for communities to learn about other religions and engage in interfaith dialogue. Local religious leaders solicited PAO for support for sustainable education programs in the region that would give residents the tools to avoid future conflict. Another potential area for future cooperation and support is skills training which would expand opportunities for residents beyond the most currently viable career paths of military or police force.

17. (SBU) Throughout the trip, PAO saw evidence of rebuilding efforts - new buildings are going up, there are more foreign visitors, and contacts spoke of new foreign investment, mainly in natural resources from British and Russian firms. Local leaders are trying to promote the region and are working on several large public displays to showcase the province's newfound stability, including reviving the Darwin to Ambon yacht race. The yacht race was held annually from 1976 to 1998 when it was halted because of sectarian violence. Last year, four Australian boats sailed to Ambon to participate in a 30th anniversary celebration and as a sign of the Australian commitment to restart the annual event (at present, scheduled for July 2007.) Local residents are hoping the event will bring hundreds of Indonesian and foreign tourists to Ambon, giving them an important opportunity to demonstrate how much the area has changed.

DESPITE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES, CHALLENGES REMAIN

18. (SBU) Maluku remains one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia with 55% of its residents earning less than \$1 per day, despite significant natural resources. Post contacts consistently say that economic development is most hampered by the lack of sea transportation infrastructure between the more than 600 islands in Maluku and to other parts of Indonesia. Remote areas have little or no access to transportation and only local markets for their goods. Local officials have plans to develop a ferry and small cargo ship fleet to help improve market access but do not have the funds to purchase ships. The lack of transportation infrastructure also

causes significant difficulties for the provincial government and police, preventing a quick response to local issues and needs and slowing implementation of major government programs.

¶9. (SBU) While the economic climate is improving, a contact from Ambon Express noted that 80% of new investments are in real estate development, not new enterprises. He voiced concern that much of the province's economic optimism is based on Maluku's abundant natural resources and potential for foreign investment, rather than the actual influx of new business. Given the complications foreign investment in resource extraction has caused in other parts of Indonesia, he wondered if local officials were being realistic in their expectations, both in terms of time and financial benefit. (Note: Many of the new buildings are "replacements" for structures destroyed during the years of sectarian violence rather than new construction. End Note.)

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE THE KEY TO AN END OF VIOLENCE

¶10. (SBU) Maluku is making an important comeback, overcoming serious sectarian violence and charting consistent improvement in social, security, and religious issues. The commitment by local leaders to move forward and not repeat the mistakes of the past is an example which other areas of Indonesia could learn from. These days, local squabbles no longer spark larger violence and are handled as routine law enforcement actions. For example, a bombing incident at Yos Sudarso Port March 3 involved two neighborhood groups fighting over control of the port using a homemade, low grade explosive device (13 people were injured by the explosion). Subsequently, a similar unexploded device was identified at an Ambon shopping center March 15. Police are treating the bombs as criminal acts, with no apparent links to former sectarian issues. The heads of the Christian Synod and Muslim Ulema Council have publicly condemned the events. Post's Ambon contacts tell us that residents attribute the two events to purely private disagreements over access to a new local market and there are no reports of disruptions in local life. Malukan political, religious and business leaders, while disturbed by the bombs, see no link to past sectarian issues and are confident that the enormous efforts put in to building inter-religious dialog over the past three years are paying dividends.

HEFFERN